

## “Father, Keep Them in Your Name”

7<sup>th</sup> Sun. of Easter – 05/16/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: John 17:11-19 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 11 [Jesus prays,] **“Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one.”**

### **Introduction**

✘ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

✘ The Gospel Reading we consider today is the middle portion of the prayer that Jesus prays to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knows that He is about to be arrested, unjustly tried, and then tortured and crucified tomorrow on Good Friday.

→ But He’s not alone in the Garden is He? All of His disciples, minus Judas Iscariot, are with Him. And He’s concerned about them. Will they remain faithful to all that He has taught them in His absence? Will they remain faithful to the one true God; to His holy and perfect Word? Will they disagree and argue amongst themselves without Him there to intervene? Will they advance and share the saving Gospel of salvation that He has brought to the world; that He is about to fulfill and win for all mankind in His suffering, death and resurrection?

✘ These are many of the things that Jesus is wrestling with, not only for these 11 men who are with Him right now in the Garden. For in verse 20, immediately after our text, Jesus includes this in His prayer, “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word”.

→ So who is that? Who is it that eventually would come to believe in Jesus because of the words that His disciples would teach and proclaim and record in what would eventually come to be called *The Holy Bible*?

→ Is that you? ...and me? You bet it is. So that means that 2000 years ago, when Jesus was praying to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was praying for us too! Jesus was thinking about you. He was concerned about you on the night of His arrest; as He suffered and went to the cross.

✘ That makes this prayer that we look at here a bigger deal, doesn’t it? So, let’s look closely at what Jesus asked the Father regarding His disciples then and now.

→ There are three primary concerns that He raises with His Father.

### **I. Keep Them in Your Name**

✘ The first is in verse 17, “Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given Me.” What does it mean to be “in the Father’s name”?

→ It’s helpful to look earlier in His prayer, at verse eight where Jesus says, “For I have given them the words that You gave Me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from You; and they have believed that You sent Me”. Jesus is the one who made the connection with the Father for those disciples and for you and me.

→ He taught them the about His Father, who is now their Father – the One true God. He used God’s Word of truth where the Father says, for example, in Isaiah 45:4-6, “I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know Me. <sup>5</sup>I am Yahweh, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know Me, <sup>6</sup>that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides Me; I am Yahweh, and there is no

other". And a bit later in Isaiah 45:21 Yahweh continues, "And there is no other god besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides Me".

→ Jesus' disciples in Gethsemane believed in the one true God; they believed that He had sent Jesus to them as their Savior. Friends, do you believe in Yahweh as the one and only true God? Do you believe He sent Jesus as His Son to be your Savior? If so, then you are "in the Father's name" just as they were that night?

✘ Jesus' prayer continues, "...that they may be one even as we are one". This is why He prays for the Father to keep them in His name. Because the only way for His believers; for His Holy Christian Church today to be unified is if we remain unwaveringly faithful to His holy Word of truth.

→ That's why there are so many different Church bodies today, because the world has influenced and tempted and convinced people to question and change and stray from the clear Word of truth He's given in the Bible.

✘ In verse 12 Jesus describes how He was able to keep His disciples faithful and guard them against all of the enticements and sinful desires of this world. He was there with them in the flesh. He was able to hold them accountable when they strayed. He was there to settle any disagreements that arose.

✘ But here's the problem, in verse 14 Jesus says, "I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

→ Now, through faith in Jesus, they/we are "in the Father's name". That means that even while we still live in the world, as Christians, we are no longer of the world. We're different now!

→ And the world doesn't like the fact that we're different. The world doesn't like that we don't buy into its worship of money and influence and fleshly desires and following feelings rather than truth. As Jesus says, the world "hates" us because we don't bow down to the world's false god of "me, myself, and I".

✘ But Jesus knows that the world is a very dangerous place for His believers, because even as we believe and confess in the one true God, we are still weak and imperfect and subject to sin and Satan and all of their tricks.

→ And so, we need help to remain intimately connected to the One true God. Because separation from God; from Jesus opens the door to the world. Separation from His Word can make us lazy in our faith. Separation from the Father eventually can lead us to lose out on His gift of salvation.

→ As your pastor, that has been my greatest concern during this pandemic, that the separation and disconnect we've had to experience from regular and personal contact with God and His means of grace in Word and Sacrament, will lead many of us to get used to living in the world and become disconnected so that we are no longer "in the Father's name"; no longer a part of His family of believers, and eventually no longer a part of those who are saved by Christ.

✘ Well, today, I am boldly saying, "It's time!" It's time for us; for you and me to reconnect; to get back into worship on a weekly basis. It's time to connect together in studying God's Word as soon as we are able.

→ The Father has kept us safe and He has blessed us with significant improvement in the Pandemic so that now we can more safely be together and interact and support each other in our spiritual health.

## II. Don't Take Them out of the World

- ✘ But Jesus prays for more. His second primary supplication begins in verse 15, “I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one”.
  - ➔ Now wait a minute, Jesus just finished talking about how dangerous it is for His believers to be in the world. So why does He ask that the Father keep us here? Because the world needs us; more precisely, the world needs the witness and word that only believers in Christ can share and proclaim.
- ✘ Yes, this world that is filled with more and more souls that are lost to the truth and entrapped by sin and outside of salvation needs Jesus Christ! People desperately need the testimony that alone can place them “in the Father’s name”.
  - ➔ Verses 11-12 of our Epistle Reading today says, “...this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 Jn. 5:11-12)
  - ➔ Jesus tells us in verse 18 that this is the very reason why the Father sent Him into the world, and “so”, continues Jesus, “I have sent them into the world”. As we showed earlier, that “them” includes you and me here today. Jesus has sent us into the world to spread the Word of Christ. 1 Peter 3:15 tells us, “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”.
- ✘ Even as we live in the world and boldly interact with those around us to share the Gospel of Jesus, He still prays that the Father will “keep [us] from the evil one” (v. 15).
  - ➔ And before you try to make the excuse that you “don’t know enough” or “don’t know how” to witness, consider the story of a gentleman who lived in the Crimea area of Ukraine. He was born into a Muslim family and attended schools that taught him the Islam religion. He then came to the United States and was exposed to Christian love, which he saw as being much different from the teachings of the Qur’an.
    - Because of the loving actions of Christians, he concluded that the Qur’an could not be what God really wants for His people. Christians are often faulted for not witnessing their faith in the world through their actions. But here a man came to know Jesus through the Christian people that he met.
- ✘ Folks, we have work to do in this world as Jesus indicates here when He prays to the Father that we will be kept in this world to share His love and truth. When we get out of the way and actually let loose our lives as Christians upon the world, people will be changed, and the world will be changed as well.

### III. Sanctify Them in the Truth

- ✘ To that end, Jesus’ third primary prayer to the Father is in verse 17, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth”. To be sanctified again is to be set apart; to actually stand out as different from the rest of the world.
  - ➔ And do not be deceived folks!! The world and its ways lead to only one place – death and condemnation.
- ✘ As I described earlier, it breaks my heart, just as it does Jesus’ heart I’m sure, every time a beloved member of Christ falls away from Him and His Church; away from His support system of Word and Sacrament and brothers/sisters to lean on, encourage and love in Christ.
  - ➔ It breaks my heart when they not only stop attending worship, but when they will no longer return calls from me, or their elder, or other members wanting to see how they are doing.

- It especially breaks my heart when those people refuse to listen to loving encouragement and we later hear that they no longer live “in the Father’s name”.
- ✘ This is why Jesus prays this prayer. He knows how important it is that you and I be sanctified and kept in His Word of truth. This is why He says in verse 19, “For their sake I consecrate Myself, that they also may be sanctified in the truth”.
- Having addressed the needs of His disciples and you and me, Jesus indicates that He is now ready to voluntarily enter into His sacrificial and atoning death on the cross, where He sets Himself apart from the rest of mankind as He says in John 14:6, that He is “the way, and the truth, and the life” so that “No one comes to the Father except through [Him]”. And in John 11:25-26, Jesus set Himself apart from the world, saying, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die”.
- Yes, Jesus is the only means by which you and I and all souls can be in a saving, eternal connection with God the Father.

## **Conclusion**

- ✘ So, please join me in a prayer of our own back to Jesus this morning, “Thank You Jesus for including us in Your prayer to the Father. Thank you for connecting us to You and the Father’s Holy name for our forgiveness, salvation and life. Thank You for blessing us with the joy of proclaiming and sharing You and Your Word of truth and love with all in the world around us. Keep us safe and saved in the Father’s name today and forever”. Amen.
- Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*